

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings, and all prior versions, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A friction stir welding method ~~of an abutted portion~~ of a first member and a second member, comprising the steps of:

~~at said abutted portion, arranging a third member at an outer side beyond said of a first member and an outer face of said a second member, thereby forming an abutted portion of the third member and the first member and of the third member and the second member, and~~

carrying out a friction stir welding to said abutted portion using a rotary tool which is inserted in said third member and said abutted portion from said third member.

2. (Currently amended) A friction stir welding method ~~of an abutted portion~~ of a first member and a second member, comprising the steps of:

~~overlapping a third member to an end portion of said a first member at said abutted portion and an end portion of said a second member, thereby forming an abutted portion of the third member and the first member and of the third member and the second member, and~~

carrying out friction stir welding at said abutted portion using a rotary tool which is inserted in said third member and said abutted portion.

3. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said first member and said second member are spaced from each other, forming a gap therebetween, and said third member bridges said gap.

4. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 2, wherein at least one of the first and second members has a recessed portion at an end thereof closest to the other of the first and second members, and the third member, in overlapping the end portions of the first and second members, is positioned in the recessed portion.

5. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 4, wherein both of the first and second members have a recessed portion at an end thereof closest to the other of the first and second members, and the third member, in overlapping the end portions of the first and second members, is positioned in the recessed portions.

6. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 5, wherein said abutted portion, at which said friction stir welding is carried out, includes a region of the first and second members adjacent to said recessed portions.

7. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 4, wherein said abutted portion, at which said friction stir welding is carried out, includes a region of the first and second members adjacent to said recessed portion.

8. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 2, wherein said first member and said second member are spaced from each other, forming a gap therebetween, and said third member bridges said gap.

9. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 8, wherein both of the first and second members have a recessed portion at an end thereof closest to the other of the first and second members, and the third member, in overlapping the end portions of the first and second members, is positioned in the recessed portions.

10. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 9, wherein said abutted portion, at which said friction stir welding is carried out, includes a region of the first and second members adjacent to said recessed portions.

11. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 8, wherein upper surfaces of the first and second members, and of the third member, are in substantially a same plane, during the friction stir welding.

12. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 2, wherein upper surfaces of the first and second members, and of the third member, are in substantially a same plane, during the friction stir welding.